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# India and Global Governance: The Politics of Ambivalent Reform

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## **Abstract**

*This article examines India's emergence in four institutions: the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations Security Council. The article demonstrates that while India's reform diplomacy has consistently been pursued across these institutions, India has maintained the same approach to reform even after its position in certain institutions has improved. In explaining this condition, the article argues that Indian leaders strive to improve the country's position in global governance but maintain that India has not yet reached a position through which it can unilaterally identify new objectives for reform. For this reason, India remains dependent upon coalitions with emerging powers and developing countries in order to exert influence in global governance. India's solidarity with these coalitions conditions the adaptability of its reform agenda and prohibits the pursuit of diplomatic initiatives that do not address the collective interests of the global South.*

**Keywords:** India's foreign policy; reform of global governance, BRICS, global South.

## Introduction

India's diplomacy has been vocal in exposing the inconsistencies of the Bretton Woods order with the contemporary realities of international affairs. Indian officials consistently stress that the democratisation of global governance necessitates recognising the growing role of emerging powers and developing countries in multilateral fora. India's own place at the highest table of international institutions is justified on these grounds. This approach to reform is pursued in consistent fashion but is often marked by controversy. India's diplomacy appears to be in disjuncture with the country's own re-positioning in global governance since India is becoming an 'insider' in certain fora but continues to act as an 'outsider'.

Explanations for this behaviour vary. Structural analyses place emphasis on the external constraints that prohibit India and the other BRICS from playing a system-shaper role. Different factors such as the rigidity of certain organisations against institutional change, and the unwillingness of Western powers to abolish their established positions, affect India's relocation in global governance (Helleiner, 2010; Wade, 2011). While such impediments to reform are evident, India's leadership is also invited by established powers that recognise India as a major partner in global governance (Wagner, 2010). In this respect, India's ambivalence also derives from domestic factors. India's foreign policy is characterised by an 'irrational' strategic behaviour, lack of a grand strategy, and a political culture that favours a moralistic approach to international affairs (Narlikar, 2006; Pant, 2009). While these strands of literature have clearly identified India's position in international relations, the country's changing position in global governance deserves greater attention. This is imperative for understanding why India remains reluctant to embrace its new-found influential role in different institutions, and identify new targets and possibilities for reform.

This article examines India's diplomacy in four institutions: the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). It argues that India has improved its position in certain institutions but has not re-adjusted its reform agenda to identify new objectives commensurate with its improved position. Accordingly, India's inability to promote reform in certain fora does not lead to reassessing its existing approach. In explaining this condition, it is argued that Indian leaders strive to improve the country's position in global governance but consider that India has not yet reached a position through which it can unilaterally engineer new objectives. For this reason, India is still dependent upon coalitions with emerging powers and developing countries in order to promote reform. As a result, India's commitment to the collective interests of the global South conditions the adaptability of its reform agenda. India alters its reform diplomacy in cases where it can continue to express the collective interests of developing countries; it refrains, however, from initiating any changes to its diplomacy in cases where the interests of the global South will no longer be served by India's new reform agenda.

## **India's Re-Positioning in International Institutions**

### **World Trade Organisation**

The WTO is arguably the institution where India has been most successful to date in enhancing its influence. India's emergence as a trading power was initially forged through its campaign to forestall the launch of a new round at the 2001 Doha Ministerial Conference. India's campaign promoted the resolution of outstanding implementation issues from the Uruguay Round and resisted the inclusion of the so-called 'Singapore Issues' (investment, competition, facilitation, and government procurement) into the negotiations. India's coalition-building strategy was focused on leading the Like-Minded Group (LMG), a group that blocked the Singapore Issues and promoted alternative developmental proposals (Odell and Narlikar, 2006). India's inflexible strategy caused its isolation in the endgame of the negotiations and India was forced to accept the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). India's grandstanding, however, until the latest hours of the ministerial served to consolidate its image as a leader of the global South whose consensus would be essential for concluding future negotiations.

The 2003 Cancun Ministerial Conference witnessed India exercising its negotiating muscle with greater effectiveness, especially through its coalition-building strategy. India's leadership was the catalyst for the formation of the G-20 coalition, a group that combined the bargaining weight of emerging powers such as Brazil, China and South Africa). The G-20 exposed the false rhetoric of the North on trade liberalisation and put forward an alternative agenda that gathered broad support in the global South (Taylor, 2007). India also provided leadership in other coalitions such as the Core Group and the G-33, with the former demanding the removal of the Singapore Issues from the DDA and the latter promoting flexibilities on food security. Along with its Southern allies, India managed to block negotiations and counter-weight the US-EU agenda, ultimately causing to the collapse of the ministerial. The debacle demonstrated the bargaining power of emerging powers and allowed India to substantially improve its position in the WTO. India's capacity to exert such influence was also a product of a long-term process of social learning and adaption within the decision-making structures of multilateral trade (Hurrell and Narlikar, 2006).

India's recognition as trading power was further enhanced during the negotiations that led to the 2004 July Framework Agreement and the 2005 Hong-Kong Ministerial Conference. During this period, India consolidated its pivotal position through its participation in the Five-Interested Parties (US, EU, Brazil, India, and Australia), and subsequently as a member of the New Quad (comprised of US, EU, Brazil, India; also known as the G-4 of the WTO). The latter replaced the traditional West-centric Quad (US, EU, Japan, Canada) that had led negotiations in the Uruguay Round. Throughout 2004-5, India played a major role in a re-negotiation of the DDA that entailed removing three Singapore Issues from the agenda (and retaining only trade facilitation), and agreeing to eliminate all export subsidies by 2013. India's

recognition as a leading trading power was in itself an important outcome of the Hong Kong Ministerial (Bello, 2005).

From the Hong-Kong ministerial onwards, India consistently participated in the inner core of the WTO decision-making process. During 2006-2008, India was part of all power configurations that led the informal process of consensus-building. India's role remained largely defensive in these meetings. At a G-6 (US, EU, Brazil, India, Australia, Japan) meeting in 2006, the lack of agreement among the key trading parties and especially among the US and the EU, brought India to declare that the round was under sever threat due to US lack of ambition (Agence France Presse, 2006). At a G-4 (US, EU, Brazil, India) meeting in June 2007, India along with Brazil refused to concede to the US/EU offer on Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) and the talks again collapsed. The Indian side blamed the US and the EU for brinkmanship tactics that aimed at causing divisions within developing countries. India declared it would prioritise its alliance with the G-20 and other developing countries instead of prioritising the G-4 process (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2007). Finally, during a critical G-7 (US, EU, Brazil, China, India, Australia, Japan) meeting in July 2008, the Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath rejected a deal that seemed to be acceptable by all other key players. Nath's justification was that the interests of India and developing countries could not possibly be served by a package that was inadequate in offering special developmental clauses, especially on issues of food security (Blustein, 2008).

While India was not the sole responsible for the recurrent deadlock of the DDA, its image was clearly one of an obstructionist negotiator. The onset of the global financial crisis at the end of 2008 provided a new opportunity to India to act as a system-shaper, especially after it became a member of the G-20 Leaders Summit. India began to take diplomatic initiatives to help overcome the DDA deadlock, hosting the first post-crisis WTO meeting in New Delhi in 2009, and submitting a number of comprehensive proposals that aimed at strengthening the WTO (WTO, 2009b). Despite such proactive engagement, India's language continued to reflect an ambivalence of fully embracing its apparent role as a major stakeholder. Addressing the 2009 Ministerial Conference in Geneva, the Indian Commerce Minister Anand Sharma noted: 'while we have no problem of engaging in any format to move the negotiations forward, the multilateral process which guarantees transparency and inclusivity has to be the basic mode of negotiations' (WTO, 2009a, p. 3). At the next Ministerial Conference in 2011, Sharma was more explicit: 'Decisions have to necessarily be based on multilateral consensus, regardless of the format in which negotiations take place...I have heard suggestions for negotiating issues amongst a critical mass of members. This path is fraught with risk. Plurilateral agreements are a throwback to the days when decisions taken by a few determined the future of the rest' (WTO, 2011, p. 2.). Reaffirming India's commitment to the global South, Sharma stressed that 'development issues, particularly those of interest to LDCs,

should be the foremost priority' in the Doha Round, and noted that 'India was the first developing country to extend duty free quota access to all LDCs' (ibid).

India's cautious approach finally translated into a proactive role at the 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference. The Ministerial focused on two major issues: food security and trade facilitation. Negotiations were largely determined by the persistence of the Indian delegation to secure a meaningful package on food security and provide flexibilities for subsistence farmers in India and other developing countries (Financial Times, 2013). Indian demands caused a deadlock initially but after satisfactory language on food security was agreed, India conceded to negotiating trade facilitation, effectively sealing the final agreement. The deal reflected India's willingness to engage in trade-offs, provided that clear developmental flexibilities were established. Most importantly, the Bali deal showed that for the first time, India was willing to act independently of developing country coalitions (such as the G-33 which is focused on issues of food security) and pursue its own path to renegotiating the DDA (Bridges Daily Update, 5 December 2013).

### **International Monetary Fund/World Bank**

India has traditionally exerted a degree of influence in the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) by always having a director in both executive boards, and a strong presence of Indian officials in the permanent staff of these institutions (Schaffer, 2009, pp. 75-76). India's bid for influence, however, has increasingly been marked by its campaign for reforming the voting and quota shares of these institutions.<sup>1</sup> The process of reallocating influence in the IFIs has been less flexible compared to the WTO, but has gradually encompassed India's emerging status. Indian officials, however, often claim that substantial obstacles remain in integrating emerging powers in the global finance governance.

In September 2006, India suffered a decrease in its influence in the IMF. Its voting share dropped from 1.95 to 1.91 per cent (though its quota share remained unchanged) at the same time when four developing countries (China, Mexico, South Korea and Turkey) witnessed an increase in their voting shares. India had previously allied with Argentina, Brazil and Egypt in a campaign against this reform process. The four countries had jointly stated: 'the disturbing picture that emerges is that some developing countries will be given increases by reducing the shares of some other equally deserving developing countries. This position is clearly unacceptable' (The Hindu, 2006a). India also attempted to mobilise support from the Commonwealth in

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<sup>1</sup> According to the IMF, 'Each member country of the IMF is assigned a quota, based broadly on its relative position in the world economy. A member country's quota determines its maximum financial commitment to the IMF, its voting power, and has a bearing on its access to IMF financing' (IMF, 2014). The World Bank uses IMF quotas for its own allocation of votes: 'Each new member country of the Bank is allotted 250 votes plus one additional vote for each share it holds in the Bank's capital stock. The quota assigned by the Fund is used to determine the number of shares allotted to each new member country of the Bank' (World Bank, 2014).

‘proposing a roadmap which enhances the voice of the developmental community’ (Mallawarachi, 2006). A total of 23 developing countries, including India, voted against the 2006 reform plan but lost the vote (Kurtenbach, 2003). Despite this setback, India declared its commitment to continue its campaign for reforming the IFIs. India’s Finance Minister C. Chidambaram stressed the need for a new formula capable of ‘reflecting the economic strength of countries in the 21st century’ (The Hindu, 2006b). The Minister argued that allocating voting power should be determined by GDP (on a PPP basis), GDP growth rate, and foreign exchange reserves. India’s global ranking on all three indicators was higher compared to its IMF voting position (ibid).

In April 2008, a new round of reforms saw India ascending to the 11th position in the IMF. India’s quota share increased from 1.92 to 2.44 per cent, while its voting share increased from 1.88 to 2.34 per cent (The Times of India, 2008). In the same year, a process of ‘voice reform’ took place in the World Bank but delivered no benefits to India that actually witnessed a minimal decrease in its percentage from 2.78 to 2.77 per cent (Development Committee, 2010a, p. 18). Following such partial success, India intensified its campaign for further reform. The Indian Finance Minister noted that ‘resistance to the overdue change will only detract from the legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of these institutions...the Fund and the Bank cannot emerge from the crisis unchanged. They have to enhance their legitimacy to perform their expanded roles and mandates effectively’ (Business Line, 2009).

At the 2010 Annual Meetings of the IFIs, India called for a 5-6 per cent shift of quota shares from advanced to developing countries in order to ‘restore the Fund’s legitimacy’ (IMF, 2010). India also committed to buying \$10 billion of IMF bonds, signalling its willingness to participate in the burden sharing of the Fund and further support its reform campaign (Agence France Presse, 2009). India’s campaign appeared to bear results in 2010 in both IFIs. In April 2010, India became the 7th largest stakeholder in the World Bank (from its previous position as 11th), with its voting power increasing from 2.77 to 2.91 per cent (The Economic Times, 2010). The Indian Finance Minister noted that this was only a ‘compromise package’ until the next phase of reallocating votes scheduled to take place by 2015. The Minister noted the need to developing a formula that will further ‘reflect the evolving nature and dynamism of the world economy and lead to parity for the DTCs (Developing and Transition Countries)’ (Development Committee, 2010, p. 3). In October 2010, a new round of IMF reforms, promoted this time through the G-20 Leaders Summit, allowed India to further improve its IMF position from 11th to 8th, increasing its quota share from 2.44 to 2.75 per cent (The Economic Times, 2010).

India’s diplomacy in the IFIs has been based extensively on coalition-building. The G-24 has served as India’s preferred platform for pursuing reform. The coalition, established in 1971, has traditionally coordinated action in issues of finance and development, holding bi-annual sessions prior to IMF and World Bank sessions (G-24, 2012). In 2009, India was elected as second vice-chair of the G-24, which

automatically led to assuming the first vice-chair for 2010-11, and the chair of the G-24 for 2011-12 (Business Standard, 2009). The chairmanship of the G-24 allowed India to mobilise support for its proposal for a 5-6 per cent transfer of quotas from advanced to emerging economies in the IMF (The Press Trust of India, 2010). The language and positions articulated in G-24 communiqués were very close to India's reform agenda. Prior to the 2010 World Bank reforms, the G-24 had also requested a 5-7 per cent realignment of quota shares and a greater weight of GDP-PPP in the allocation formula. It had also pressed for World Bank reforms to achieve greater equity in the representation of developed and developing countries (G-24, 2010a; 2010b). India also mobilised the G-15 to promote reform (The Press Trust of India, 2010). The group has a lower profile compared to the G-24, but allows for coordinating positions between more advanced developing countries that have the capacity to pursue proactive strategies in trade, investment and finance (Sridharan, 1998).

In recent years, India has increasingly promoted reform through the BRICS coalition given that the groups' geopolitical weight provides greater leverage. In the press releases issued after the first BRICs meetings in 2009, the four states called for the reform of the IFIs to increase the voice of emerging economies (Embassy of Brazil in London, 2009; Reuters, 2009). This was reiterated at the second BRIC summit in Brasilia in April 2010. The communiqué issued noted: 'the IMF and the World Bank urgently need to address their legitimacy deficits. Reforming these institutions' governance structures requires first and foremost a substantial shift in voting power in favour of emerging market economies and developing countries to bring their participation in decision making in line with their relative weight in the world economy' (Reuters, 2010a). More recently, the BRICS states (with the addition of South Africa in 2011) have provided the funds (\$100 billion) for the formation of their own development bank, a new institution perceived as a potential rival to the IMF and the World Bank (Russia Today, 2013).

### **United Nations Security Council**

India's approach to reforming the UN calls for the organisation to become more responsive to the challenges of the contemporary world and especially to the needs of developing countries in areas such as development, democratisation, disarmament, and the environment (Kage, 2006). India's reform diplomacy has been defined by its campaign for a permanent seat in the UNSC. India was reportedly offered the permanent seat in 1955 and declined the offer (The Washington Post, 2010). Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru denied such reports and in his address to the Lok Sabha on 27 September 1955 clarified that "there has been no offer, formal or informal, of this kind... There is, therefore, no question of a seat being offered and India declining it (The Hindu, 2005). India's quest for a permanent seat became a central focus of its attempts for international recognition in the post-Cold War period. India's bid was



based on three claims: its status as the largest democracy in the world, its weight as an emerging economic power, and its extensive participation in UN peace-keeping operations (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2012).

India's campaign for a permanent seat was officially launched in 1994 and in collaboration with the G-4 (Brazil, Germany, Japan, India). The G-4 campaign culminated in 2004-5 when the four states attempted to mobilise support to gain the required two-thirds majority vote in the critical General Assembly World Summit scheduled for 2005. The G-4 demanded that the Security Council 'be expanded in both in permanent and non-permanent categories, including developed and developing countries as new permanent members' (Embassy of India, 2004). India's coalition with the G-4 encountered numerous obstacles. India initially demanded a veto seat but then shifted to a more flexible position, accepting the possibility of a permanent seat without veto power. Its alignment with the G-4 triggered the hardening of China's stance that was opposed to Japan's bid. Most critically, India failed to rally the required support from developing countries (and especially from the Africa Group) that was necessary to reach the two-thirds majority vote (Cooper and Fues, 2008, pp. 299-300). The G-4 campaign was also counter-balanced by the 'Uniting for Consensus' group, a coalition where Pakistan was a leading member and acted to block India's candidacy (UN, 2005). The outcome of the 2005 UN Summit was ultimately a defeat for India and the G-4 that failed to obtain the two-thirds majority in the General Assembly.

On a parallel level, India reform diplomacy was projected through another coalition, the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum. The group underlined 'the necessity of expanding the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent member categories, with the participation of developing countries in both categories' (IBSA, 2003). The IBSA states also coordinated their positions for reforming the WTO and the IFIs. The election of all three IBSA states as non-permanent UNSC members during 2009-2010 provided an ideal opportunity for intensifying their joint reform campaign (IBSA, 2010). India's own position gained additional momentum after US President Obama announced in November 2010 that the US would fully support India's claim for a permanent seat (Agence France Presse, 2010). India now enjoyed the support of 4 permanent UNSC members, as Britain, France and Russia had also expressed support for India's candidacy (Reuters, 2010b). China also supported India assuming a leading role in the UN but Chinese officials hinted that China would openly support India's candidacy only if the latter de-linked its campaign from Japan's candidacy (The Hindu, 2011a).

While India gradually succeeded in gaining the endorsement of established and emerging powers, it simultaneously faced the challenge of gaining the support of other developing countries. Indian officials were careful in linking the campaign of emerging powers for a permanent seat with improving representation for the global South. The Indian Ambassador to the UN Hardeep Puri noted: 'there is a growing recognition of the fact that the widespread feeling of marginalization among the un-

represented and under-represented is now leading to a sharp sense of frustration which carries with it the potential to unravel the existing system'. To correct this imbalance, the reformed UNSC should be 'reflective of contemporary realities' by granting permanent status to leading developing countries. As Puri noted, 'we can witness more effective and efficient functioning of the Security Council if and when the Council is able to utilize the energies and resources of its most willing and most capable member-states on a permanent basis' (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2011c).

The tension, however, between campaigning with emerging powers and mobilising support amongst developing countries became evident in recent years. At the start of 2011, India declared re-launching its campaign with the G-4 (Agence France Press, 2011b) as the G-4 states announced the continuation of their campaign and reaffirmed their commitment to their proposed draft resolution (Agence France Presse, 2011a). By July 2011, the G-4 states announced they enjoyed the support of more than 100 states, signalling their ability to reach the required two-thirds majority of 128 votes (Patrick, 2011). India appeared to succeed in gaining the endorsement of the African Group, especially in the context of the India-Africa Forum Summit that provided the basis for strengthening ties with Africa (The Economic Times, 2011). India and the G-4 attempted to submit a new resolution for UNSC reform but eventually failed to gather the required two-third majority (Gowan, 2013). Despite this failure, India's President Pranab Mukherjee announced that India would remain committed to achieving reform in collaboration with the G-4 (NDTV, 2014).

Nevertheless, the limitations of the G-4 forced India to shift focus to gaining the support of less-developed states. India endorsed the position of the L69 Group of developing countries (India Today, 2012), a group that demanded for the expansion of the UNSC to 25-26 members. The group included approximately 40 countries from Africa, the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and supported the expansion of the UNSC in both permanent and non-permanent members. Engaging the L69 largely reflected India's attempts at mobilise African support in the broader context of the intensified India-Africa relations and increased Indian investment and aid to Africa. A key factor driving India's policies in Africa was the attempt to persuade African states to support India's candidacy for the UNSC, with India being prepared to reciprocate in other institutions such as the WTO (Mawdsley and McCann, 2011, pp. 25, 159, 204-5).

India's voting behaviour as non-permanent UNSC member during 2011-12 was indicative of its willingness to prioritise solidarity with developing countries. India has supported Iran's right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and has expressed its 'support for a diplomatic solution' in order 'to address all outstanding issues in restoring international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme' (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2011d). India also abstained from the vote proposing a no-fly zone over Libya on the grounds that there was insufficient information on the impact of such a measure on the welfare of the

Libyan people. The Indian position stressed the need for the 'full respect for sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Libya' (Permanent Mission to the UN, 2011a). The same language was used in the case of Syria. India abstained from the vote on the UNSC resolution on the grounds that 'it does not condemn the violence perpetrated by the Syrian opposition, nor does it place any responsibility on the opposition to adjure violence and engage with the Syrian authorities' (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2011b). In the beginning of 2012, India voted for a new resolution on Syria on the precondition that any references to regime change, threat of sanctions, and military intervention, would be removed. India's positions raised scepticism on its ability to act as a responsible power in the UNSC. For certain analysts, however, India's position was rational since the alternative option of adopting a pro-Western stance was seen by Indian policy-makers as more costly. As Bajpai noted, 'voting with the West and allowing China to stand as the champion of the weak in Africa, Asia and Latin America is not a strategic plus for India' (Bajpai, 2011).

## **India's Approach to Global Governance**

### **Aligning with the BRICS**

India's diplomacy in international institutions projects a coherent reform agenda that exposes the inconsistencies of global governance with the contemporary realities of international politics. The language used by Indian officials is not centred on India's changing position but is rather framed as commitment to improving the voice of emerging powers and the global South. India's alignment with the BRICS does not directly aim at establishing strategic partnerships since there are divergent geopolitical interests within the group. It is a process, however, that allows India to promote a more equal distribution of power through which it can maintain its own autonomy. Such foreign policy reflects the world-vision of Indian elites and their preference for an equal distribution of influence between established and emerging powers (Sinha and Dorschner, 2010, pp. 86-89). The preference for a great power concert derives from India's non-aligned tradition that dictates for maintaining equal relations with all major powers and protecting India's 'strategic autonomy' (Monsonis, 2010). The Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has stressed that the process of developing 'healthy relations' with major powers must be compatible India's autonomy: 'India is too large a country to be boxed into any alliance or regional or sub-regional arrangements, whether trade, economic or political' (The Press Trust of India, 2010).

The emergence of the BRICS has been treated by Indian leaders as the pretext for advocating the reform of global governance. Prime Minister Singh summarised this view: 'the shifts in the balance of power and its implications suggest that we need to adapt ourselves...(India) can become a pole of political stability in an uncertain

world...No country has a greater interest and stake than India in a rule based and predictable international system...Our existing institutions of global governance need to change to reflect today's shift in balance' (Government of India, 2011). India has historically been a strong advocate of multilateralism since institutions have allowed India to punch above its weight and overcome the limitations of its material power (Mukherjee and Malone, 2011). India's contemporary emergence has decreased in dependence on multilateral processes. India has developed an array of bilateral relations with established and emerging powers that allow for directly engaging with balance of power politics. Nevertheless, India refrains from fully reverting to alliance-building and strategic partnerships with major powers as multilateralism is perceived as the preferred form for managing international relations (Nafey, 2008, p. 115). As the Indian Commerce Minister Anand Sharma stated: 'only multilateralism at regional and global economic partnerships can guide the world to correct historic imbalances, to achieve global economic growth and bring larger benefits such as food, energy and health security' (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2011).

Although India advocates for multilateralism to encompass the rise of the BRICS, it has been reluctant to provide the leadership for effecting this change. India has enhanced its influence in major institutions but continues to encounter the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in its relocation in global governance. This is process where India's own sovereignty and development must be safeguarded before India can adopt a proactive stance and shape negotiating outcomes. This condition means that India, like other emerging powers, understands its role in global governance through the lenses of defending national power rather than providing leadership (Acharya, 2011; Hurrell, 2006). India therefore favours a 'defensive multilateralism' that facilitates India's relocation while minimising costs in terms of autonomy and self-sufficiency (Mattoo and Subramanian, 2008, p. 62). Such multilateralism is characterised by a preference to remain a 'selective rule taker' while establishing India's authority to act as 'rule maker' (Mukherjee and Malone, 2011, p. 325). India is reluctant to fully engage with global governance processes, remaining a reactive and cautious player that proactively participates in select international fora and in particular issue areas (Ghosh, 2010). India's modest record in providing public goods across different regimes and its persistence to operate as a veto player are reflective of its unwillingness to act as responsible power (Narlikar, 2011).

Defensive multilateralism reflects the worldview of Indian elites that the country has not yet reached a position through which it can unilaterally engineer and promote new objectives for reform. For this reason, India is still preoccupied with improving its position even further, while maintaining the same reform agenda. Indian elites consider that reforming global governance is a complex process that cannot be shaped by Indian diplomacy alone since there are obvious limits to India's capacity for effecting structural change. India and the BRICS face the resilience of the G-7 states to abolish the privileged positions they occupy in international institutions (Wade, 2011). The West has claimed that recent reforms, such as the voice reallocation of the

World Bank, are substantial, but in reality these reforms have been interpreted as merely cosmetic (Vestergaard and Wade, 2013). Against these obstacles, India's reform diplomacy is better diffused through the BRICS coalition which, despite geopolitical differences, offers improved bargaining leverage for all five states as evident by the coalition's common approach to reforming global governance (Cooper and Farooq, 2013).

Indian elites therefore understand that the country has not yet reached the capacity to unilaterally advance its preferred vision of multilateralism, in contrast to expectations that demand more ambitious initiatives from India. India's emergence has generated heightened expectations in the West that it can operate as a system-shaper in a multipolar order (Sinha and Dorschner, 2010). From Washington's perspective, inviting India to act as 'responsible stakeholder' is necessary now that India occupies a pivotal position in regimes such as trade, security, energy and the environment (Dormandy, 2007). In the WTO, US officials urge India and the other BRICS to refraining from acting as "elephants hiding behind mice", which seek to be treated as developing countries although they now share little with less-developed states (Schwab, 2011). The IMF and the World Bank have endorsed the economic success of the BRICS and have aspired to promote a new form of 'global developmental liberalism' that propels India and other emerging economies to act as drivers of the global economy and as legitimisers of the neoliberal order (Cammack, 2012).

Such expectations generate a discourse on India's rise where India is understood as an imminent leader in international affairs. Indian officials, however, perceive that such heightened expectations are only a mechanism for imposing further responsibilities upon India and forcing it to undertake commitments it is not yet ready to assume (Chatterjee Miller, 2013). India's foreign policy establishment remains hostile to such expectations, and has not yet developed its own vision of how India's new found power could impact upon global governance (ibid). Peer has noted: "even as Indian elites confidently predict their country's inevitable rise, it is not difficult to detect a distinct unease about the future, a fear that the promise of India's international ascendance might prove hollow" (Peer, 2012, p. 159).

India's participation in global governance reflects this cautious approach. India has embraced its new found position in the WTO and the IFIs but refuses to abide by Western expectations for proactively contributing to the management of these regimes and committing the financial resources required for providing global public goods. Such ambivalence reflects the view of Indian elites that the country's international advocacy for redistributing global wealth must be guided by domestic preferences and the Third World ideals, with the aim of shielding India's identity as a developing country (Betz, 2012). The divergent expectations held by India and the West became apparent during the former's term as UNSC non-permanent member during 2011-12. The West expected India to demonstrate responsible leadership and promote policy change in regimes with which it maintained friendly relations such as Iran, Libya, and Syria. Such responsibility would contribute to the UNSC order and enhance India's

future prospects for permanent membership. Indian elites, however, discredited such notions of responsibility as mere subordination to US preferences, and pursued their own idea of responsibility that embedded domestic and Third World values (Mukherjee and Malone, 2013, pp. 112-3).

### **Solidarity with the global South**

The perception of Indian leaders that they cannot unilaterally engineer new objectives necessitated for maintaining the existing approach to strengthening its position through its leadership of the global South. As a result, India's attachment to the collective causes of the global South determines the adaptability and flexibility of its reform agenda. The historical roots of India's Third Worldism cannot be underplayed in this respect. Indian foreign policy has historically projected a sense of altruism and exceptionalism that have allowed India to defend the interests of weaker states. The discourse of non-alignment and non-intervention has framed India's engagement with multilateralism in both the political and economic sphere (Thakur, 1994, pp. 14-32). The post-Cold War appeared to render non-alignment as a 'historic relic' that could only keep India as 'a prisoner of the dead past' (Jain, 1996, p. 11). To date, however, India's diplomacy maintains aspects of non-alignment that often re-surface in India's reform agenda, especially in diplomatic initiatives that assist developing countries to overcome their marginalisation in global governance (Chaulia, 2002; Narlikar, 2006; Sagar, 2009). Certain Indian realists have discredited such altruism and propose a more assertive engagement with balance of power politics, omitting, however, that India's rise is itself a product of such *moralpolitik* (Hall, 2010, pp. 604-5). Indian elites consider that their search for international recognition is inextricably linked to India's commitment to non-violence, non-interference, and the values of the Third World (Basrur, 2011, pp. 192-3).

Solidarity with the global South should not be interpreted as complete lack of adaptability. India has adopted a more selective coalition-building strategy and has shown a willingness to lead flexible alliances that vary across different institutions (Mohan, 2010, pp. 140-141). Smaller groups such as the LMG and the G-20 in the WTO, and the G-24 in the IFIs, maintain aspects of bloc diplomacy but are more proactive and issue-focused compared to the missionary stance of the NAM and the G-77 (Narlikar and Tussie, 2004). As noted above, India has increasingly cooperated with other emerging powers such as Brazil and South Africa in the IBSA Dialogue Forum, and Germany and Japan in the joint campaign for UNSC reform. Participation in such transcontinental alliances augments India's capacity to shape international outcomes as emerging powers are eager to jointly strive for the redistribution of existing resources and the recognition of their status (Nel, 2010). Nevertheless, there are limits to India's adaptability. India's reform agenda will only be altered to the extent it can simultaneously address the collective interests of developing countries. Indian statements rarely refer to the process of reform without invoking the

implications of such reform for developing countries. India can maintain a reform agenda that promotes the democratisation of global governance, as long as India's diplomacy serves the interests of different developing country groups

The WTO provides the clearest insights of how India behaves when integrated in reformed institutions. Despite its rising capacity to shape WTO negotiations, India has continued practicing a defensive type of diplomacy while standing in solidarity with developing countries (Narlikar, 2010b). Notwithstanding its emergence as a trading power, India remains ambivalent in providing leadership and has often constituted an obstacle to progress in the Doha Round (as in the case of the July 2008 Ministerial). The US and the EU recognise India as a pivotal power and invite Indian leadership for concluding the round. They recognise that India's consent is necessary for winning the concessions of a number of developing countries, while injecting a much-needed degree of legitimacy to the WTO itself. India's own rhetoric reaffirms its commitment to the WTO multilateral process and the Doha Round negotiations (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2011). Its preoccupation, however, with demanding special and differential treatment while refusing any trade-offs, undermines the possibilities for consensus-building amongst the major players. It was only after India had fully established its authority in the WTO, after a decade as member of the New Quad, that it demonstrated the resolve to detach from the global South and strike a deal (at Bali) that was not fully endorsed by its developing country allies.

A similar stance can be observed in the IMF and the World Bank. Indian statements suggest that reform of the IFIs has failed to date to recognise India's economic rise. In recent years, India has been positioned as the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup> economy in the world, depending on which ranking is used (see for example the World Economic League Table for 2013-2014 or the IMF World Economic Outlook Database for 2013-2014). India's voting share in the IFIs is in accordance to its global economic standing; it is the 7th stakeholder in the World Bank and 8th stakeholder in the IMF. While global financial governance can be more flexible in accommodating emerging powers (Woods, 2010), India can hardly be placed on the losing side of reforms. Its position is slightly disproportionate (to its benefit) to its standing in the global economy. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of South-South solidarity remains intact. The Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has outlined India's outsider mentality: 'I do recognise there is a struggle for the transformation of global institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, but this is not a one-shot process. It has to be waged over the long-term and all developing countries have to be united on this' (The Hindu, 2011b).

India's actual position in the Bretton Woods system appears to be more influential than admitted by Indian officials. For example, India's relationship with the World Bank is often misperceived as eroding India's domestic policy space. India, however, often dictates the terms of development assistance provided by the Bank, and influences the very meaning of development in the organisation, especially since the Bank is dependent upon its largest borrower for demonstrating its successful role in international development (Kirk, 2011). This is a reality that India's foreign policy

establishment has refused to recognise. While Indian officials have pronounced India's 'graduation' from development assistance, they have continued to demand assistance from the IFIs for certain regions of India. Indian elites have not forged a strategy in the IFIs that is commensurate with the country's growing economic strength. As Kapur noted, 'India's strategic thinking about these institutions (the IFIs) apparently has not shifted from a "borrower" mind-set to an "owner" mind-set' (Kapur, 2013, p. 244). At the same time, India is prepared to grant large amounts of bilateral aid to other developing countries in order to maintain favourable voting relations in fora such as the UN General Assembly (Fuchs and Vadlamannati, 2013).

India's outsider mentality largely derives from the reluctance to assume roles that are not reflective of its identity as a leading developing country. This is becoming, however, an increasingly difficult endeavour. Like the rest of the BRICs, India's emergence is inextricably linked to integrating to the institutions of the liberal order (Ikenberry, 2010). The norms embedded in these institutions, however, have adverse effects for the countries whose interests India aspires to represent. Decision-making processes in these institutions favour a formal (IMF/World Bank) or informal (WTO) hierarchical structure where major powers dominate negotiating outcomes. The inclusion of the BRICS to these hierarchies has partially legitimised these structures. The New Quad in the WTO, for example, is more representative than the traditional Quad. Nevertheless, the New Quad remains fundamentally exclusionary for the majority of the global South as smaller states continue to experience their exclusion from the decision-making process (Narlikar, 2010a). The G-20 Leader Summit also reflects a North-South configuration of power that is more pluralist compared to the G-7/G-8. The G-20 process, however, has not alleviated collective perceptions of exclusion and marginalisation in the developing world as smaller states protest their exclusion from this multilateral forum (Hampson and Heinbecker, 2011, pp. 301, 306).

India is facing today the challenge of achieving the recognition of its status within institutional structures that have historically marginalised developing countries. In attempting to manage conflicting expectations over its own role, India's maintains the same reform agenda even after certain of its own demands have been met. When India's agenda appears ineffective in promoting institutional change, India is content with maintaining the same approach since it escapes the dilemma of adopting a proactive approach that could require its detachment from the global South. Such ineffectiveness does not also lead to re-evaluating the existing approach in order to adopt new strategies for promoting institutional change.

This is evident in India's position in the UNSC. Since its campaign for UNSC reform began, India has considerably increased its standing as a global power. With the exception of China, the permanent members of the UNSC all declare their support for India's candidacy. Despite the apparent strengthening of India's capacity, Indian elites maintain that India must display solidarity with the developing world in order to mobilise the required majority in the General Assembly that will support its



candidacy. Such realisation does not mean a complete lack of adaptability. India initially demanded for new permanent members with veto power but subsequently compromised for a non-veto permanent seat. Its approach, however, overall reflects a 'risk-averse strategic culture' (Mohan, 2011). India refuses to sacrifice any diplomatic capital with its Southern allies in exchange for greater recognition and endorsement by the US and the other major powers. India's campaign has been held hostage by the unrealistic demands of the Africa Group for veto-wielding permanent seats, and has been driven to an intractable position by African states that deliberately seek to stall the reform process (Taroor, 2012, pp. 273-274). An alternative strategy could focus on consolidating a strategic partnership with the US, the one state that could change the dynamic of the reform process and mobilise greater support in favour of India (ibid). Remaining attached to the global South diminishes the prospects of India's own campaign and renders India unsuitable for permanent membership. India's behaviour is interpreted as lack of commitment to the values of the liberal international order, and Western powers perceive that granting India a permanent UNSC seat could undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of this order (Castaneda, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

India's diplomacy projects a comprehensive critique of the Bretton Woods architecture but often fails to assess on-going institutional changes that recognise India's status in order to identify new targets for reform. A key reason behind this ambivalence is the view of domestic elites that India has not yet reached a position through which it can unilaterally promote new objectives. For this reason, India is still dependent upon cooperation with emerging powers and developing countries in order to exert influence in global governance. As a result, India's attachment to the collective causes of the global South conditions the adaptability of its reform agenda. The dilemma of maintaining a Third World identity and simultaneously acting as a responsible power remains at the core of India's diplomacy. India has strived to balance between these roles by engaging with the West while committing to the archetypal principles in its foreign policy; i.e. non-intervention, non-alignment, and strategic autonomy. External factors such as the persistent deadlocks amongst major players in WTO negotiations and the complexity of the UNSC reform process, allow India to delegate responsibility for the lack of reform to other parties. The extent to which this approach will be viable in the long-term is questionable. India's augmenting material resources are likely to increasingly expose the disjuncture between India's search for major power status and its claim to leadership of the global South. India's willingness to detach from the principles of non-alignment and Third World internationalism will therefore determine considerably the nature of its repositioning in global governance.

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